



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### **Ditton Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior School**

New Road, Ditton ME20 6AE

**Previous SIAS grade: Good**

**Current inspection grade: Good**

**Diocese: Rochester**

Local authority: Kent

Dates of inspection: 1 December 2015

Date of last inspection: 18 November 2010

School's unique reference number: 118854

Headteacher: Robert Worth

Inspector's name and number: Anne Southgate 820

#### **School context**

Ditton Junior School is a smaller than average sized primary school. The pupils are from predominantly white British backgrounds with a small minority who are of Gypsy Roma heritage. Achievement has improved considerably in the last two years, and the school was judged to be 'good' by Ofsted in January 2015. There are close ties with the local Anglican church, which is opposite the school. The vast majority of pupils come from the adjoining infant school, which is not a Church school. There has been a period of turbulence in leadership and the current headteacher was appointed as interim headteacher in September 2014.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Ditton Junior School as a Church of England school are good**

- The distinctiveness of the school as a church school is made clear to families whose children move from the infant school.
- The current headteacher has raised morale and achievement by building a sense of community, which is based on Christian values.
- Pupils' spiritual development is good, as a result of the many opportunities to reflect, to think deeply, and to pray.

#### **Areas to improve**

- Clarify the biblical basis for the school's Christian values, so that all are able to articulate this.
- Ensure that the Christian teaching underpinning school policies is clear.
- Ensure that teaching and assessment in Religious Education (RE) is consistently good across the whole school.

#### **The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is good at meeting the needs of all learners**

Following a period of turbulence in leadership, there is now a real sense of being a Christian

community, in which every child genuinely matters. The Christian character of the school has been strengthened. This means that everyone feels valued and cared for, as part of a team working to achieve the best for each child. A set of Christian values which includes empathy, respect, responsibility, courage is well known, and is related to both learning and behaviour. These values, together with the belief in everyone being of equal importance, have resulted in improved achievement, and in highly respectful relationships between all members of the school community. Governors are able to articulate clearly the biblical basis for the school's values, but this is not the case with all of the staff and pupils. RE is helping pupils to have a deeper understanding of the Christian nature of the school's values, and of diversity. A focus on contemporary issues, such as "pray for Paris", and support for a wide range of charities, helps pupils to understand better the world around them. High quality displays around the school prompt pupils to reflect and to think deeply. These are often related to the school's Christian values. An example of this is the year 3 display, showing their thoughts empathising with the characters in the nativity story. As a result, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is good**

Collective worship has developed considerably in recent years and is now highly valued by all. There is a clear, varied and effective pattern for worship. This includes a "values worship", at which the school's Christian values are explained and set in their Christian context. This is followed by time in classes when pupils are helped to reflect on what has been learned, and to relate this to their own lives. This is resulting in a deeper understanding of the Christian significance of the school's values. Pupils have an understanding of key Christian beliefs, such as that of God being Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Adults and children alike speak positively about their experience of school worship. They all engage fully, creating a sense of reverence and prayerfulness. Pupils particularly enjoy the Taize style worship, which is led by the 'Leading Lights', a year 5 group of pupil worship leaders. Anglican responses, such as, "The Lord be with you", are used. Major Christian festivals are celebrated in the church. Pupils appreciate the opportunities offered to pray and to be quiet during the school day. Good use is made of space to provide quiet prayer areas outside of classrooms. These are enhanced by engaging, interactive displays, which are frequently used by pupils and by adults. This addresses an issue from the previous inspection. Monitoring of collective worship has increased and now provides effective feedback so that improvements can be made. This also addresses a development point from the previous inspection.

### **The effectiveness of Religious Education is good**

Pupils make good progress in RE during their time at the school, often from low starting points. Pupils, therefore, leave the school achieving standards which are in line with national expectations. RE has a high profile in the school's curriculum and it is led well. Teachers are supported well in planning RE lessons. Training in RE is prioritised and there are regular staff meetings devoted to improving the delivery and quality of RE. Pupils are given challenging tasks, particularly in Year 6. As a result, some pupils are able to achieve above the expected levels of attainment. Most pupils look forward to their RE lessons and they are excited by the wide range of activities offered. Pupils often think deeply and ask questions. For example, a Year 3 pupil asked how Jesus could be God, when he was born as a human baby. Assessment in RE has been developed with the help of training from the diocese. Response marking, in line with school policy, enables pupils to reflect on, and to improve their work. The curriculum focuses on Christianity, but also covers other world faiths. This enhances pupils' understanding of, and respect for, diversity. Much teaching and assessment in RE is good, but this is not consistent across the whole school. Sometimes pupils are not given activities which allow them to fulfil the learning intentions.

### **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is good**

The school has experienced a period of considerable turbulence in leadership since the last inspection. The current headteacher is successfully addressing the fact that the infant school, from which the vast majority of pupils come, is not a church school. He ensures that he meets with parents, to explain clearly the significance of being a church school. He has also ensured that the school environment makes the church school status explicit. He has used the Christian character of the school to build staff morale and to make everyone feel valued. Foundation governors make a significant contribution to the development and monitoring of the school as a church school. Evaluation has led to improvements, such as increased pupil leadership of collective worship, and to high quality interactive displays. The incumbent is active in helping staff to understand fully the Christian nature of the school. The partnership with the church is positive. A group from the church congregation came to school so that pupils could ask them questions. Pupils valued this opportunity to find out about the lives of “real life Christians”. Leaders have embedded Christian values, and they use these to raise achievement and to increase wellbeing. However, the biblical basis for the values is not clear in the school’s documentation nor in its policies. The RE leader is well supported, and is able to access appropriate training. RE is taken very seriously and is part of the school’s improvement plan. The arrangements for RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements.

SIAMS report December 2015, Ditton CE Junior School, Ditton, ME20 6AE